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Final Exam

Take your favorite sport.  Based on what we have talked about this semester, how would you change your sport?  Use the theories and concepts from the class to help you answer the questions below.

1. Is your sport a pleasure and participation or power and performance sport?  How would you change it to make it consistent with the opposite idea?

Soccer is known as being a power and performance sport. The reason for this is because it emphasizes strength, speed, and competition. As seen in the book power and performance sports “emphasize sex difference in terms of physical strength, control through domination, and status as a reward for physical conquests” (166). To make soccer more consistent with pleasure and participation sports, changes would have to occur. Pleasure and participation sports emphasize active participation, connections between people, personal growth, enjoyment, and inclusive processes where everyone is welcome (68). As discussed in class, there are many benefits to participating in both power and performance sports, and pleasure and participation sports. To see soccer turn into a pleasure and participation sport, we could: emphasize participation over competition by giving out participation trophies instead of first place trophies, make soccer more about the friendships made and connections between players and coaches, and emphasize individual personal growth by incorporating an award for “most improved”.

2.  How would you revise your sport to insure that children have a "proper socialization?"

 Like many sports, soccer is a sport that people can start at a very young age. I’m a prime example of this. I started kicking a ball around when I was around two/three years old and started playing recreationally when I was five. It is imperative that parents, mentors, and coaches set the right example, and teach the next generation good values and beliefs through the sport. Although I am not a parent, I have been raised by two loving parents who would do anything for me. They have shown how as a parent you only want the best for your children. As a result, implementing rules and teaching children through soccer is something that is currently being done, but is also something that can be improved. One of the ways in which soccer has shown that it does this is by professional clubs having youth academies. These youth academies oftentimes facilities where the teams get to go to school and play soccer. These youth centers are places where the teams implement the values, beliefs, and goals they have for everyone apport of the organization. This is something I believe is vital for all soccer clubs around the world. If I had the power to implement a new way in which values and beliefs could be implemented through soccer would be by having soccer learning centers. These would be centers where children can go to gain a good education through the playing the sport they love. This links to the ‘current trends related to sports in society’ in *Sports in Society* where the author mentions how “becoming aware of current trends and the factors that influence them is the starting point for being effective agents in creating the futures we want to see” (595).

4.  What rules and structures would you change for your sport and what ideals/ideologies are these consistent with?  Explain.

If I had the power, I would make significant changes to the rules and structures within soccer that emphasize gender differences and instead promote positive ideologies of women in sports. Current ideologies of women in sports that we talked about in class include how men are stronger than women, women are too emotional for intense competition, and as a female you have to look like a “woman” when you play your sport. If this was to be done, I think we could encourage more male and female athletes to compete in friendly games together. This would show how women and men can play soccer together and against one another in a competitive fashion. I would also like to change the pay among male and female athletes all over the world to make it ‘fair’. Until this is done and achieved, it’s hard to argue that male and female athletes are treated ‘fairly’. As I speak about the Premier League often, it is a great reference. The average players make around 3 million a year. Yet the women’s USA soccer players make around $25,000 - $85,000 a year! This is clearly not fair and needs to change.

5.  How would you change your sport so that it provides more opportunities for minorities and women at all levels of the structure?

 I truly believe this is being done already with soccer. This can be seen by the making of recreational (rec) leagues. These are leagues that most places have around the world. These leagues were put in place for people of all ages to play the game they love. To play in the rec leagues you don’t have to be picked or recruited, you simply sign up. This gives everyone the opportunity to participate and play within their community. When it comes to women’s soccer, I would say the first thing that comes to mind on how more opportunities could be provided at all levels of structure would be publicity/exposure. Women’s soccer has become more popular every year. It still has a long way to go. Over the past year the United States women’s national team has been public figures regarding the issues of women’s pay, racial issues, and gay rights issues. They are a team who is really gaining more media exposure for women’s soccer on and off the pitch. More exposure means that more changes can happen, and more opportunities can occur. Coakley mentioned, how prior to the 1970’s women barley even played sports (214). This shows how women’s participation has really only been relevant within the past 50 years, this is nothing compared to male sports, and history.

6.How would you change the cost of your sport so that all individuals have an opportunity to play, irrespective of cost.

If I had the opportunity, I would change the cost of soccer so that all individuals have an opportunity to play, irrespective of cost. The way this could be done, is by having a board for each country where a percentage of professional soccer clubs/organizations, athletes, and CEO’s salaries are given to help fund the individuals for that country that want to play. This would allow the child to have gear and play the sport the enjoy without them or their guardian worrying about how they are going to pay for soccer. The boards would be the ones distributing the funds throughout the country, this being their full-time job.

7.How would you change your sport to be more inclusive of all ages and those with a disability?

 I think soccer has done a really good job at making it more inclusive of all ages and those with disabilities. One of the ways this is seen is the use of ball boys. Ball boys are people who are set up around the pitch that are sat with a ball ready to give it to a player when a ball goes out of play. Ball boys are usually used in all professional settings, along with sometimes being used in amateur games. Oftentimes, ball boys are either youth players from the academy of the team playing, local children from the area and people with disabilities. Another way that soccer has made it inclusive for all ages and those with a disability is teams letting people walk out with the team at the beginning of the match for the national anthem/team line up readings. This are oftentimes people who are younger, but people of all ages have done it and still do it. A lot of times these are people with a disability. It’s a way for the team and the players to give back to the people that make it possible for them to do what they love for a living.

8.Do you think your sport should be played at the HS and college level?  Why or why not?

 I definitely think soccer should be player at the high school and college level. Soccer is a sport that is played all around the world. It’s almost as if it’s a universal language. Whether you like it or not, you know what soccer is. Although soccer isn’t looked at in ways other sports are like football and basketball in the United States, it is growing by the day. The Major Soccer League (MLS) is the highest soccer league in the United States. This is a league that is getting better year by year as it is attracting big time players from all over the world, especially Europe. Having big time stars come over and play in the MLS will only help build and make soccer in the united states more popular, while raising the level.

 Although soccer may not be looked at in the ways football and basketball are in the United Sates, soccer is still popular to a degree and most colleges have teams. Not only do most colleges have teams but the teams are getting better every year. Both women’s and men’s soccer is becoming more played in the United State by the day. Having high school teams allows players to play for their high school to then get recognized and scouted by colleges. It can be argued that players go from academy teams and high school teams don’t matter when going straight to college, but this is not the case for everyone. This may be the case for the top players, but there are hundreds of division 1 teams, barring in mind that there are 3 divisions so there are plenty of teams and opportunities for players. College soccer is necessary because this is the way you get looked it if you want to go pro. Unlike other countries in the United states if you want to go pro your route the majority of the time is thorough playing college soccer and getting scouted from there.

9.Would you create/continue a professional league for your sport or would you shift it towards more of an amateur focus?  How many teams would you have and where would you put the stadiums?  Why?

 If I had the option, I would choose to have the professional soccer leagues continue. Although I would want them to continue, I think there are things that could improve the leagues. One of the ways in which I think the professional soccer leagues could be improved is by implementing financial caps. Implementing financial caps would make competition I my opinion more interesting. If all clubs were treated equally and all clubs followed the same rules this would mean teams really couldn’t “bye titles”. For example, Manchester City is one of the biggest teams globally. They are known for having some of the best players in the world, one of the best managers/coaching staff in the world, and winning trophies. This a lot of people would argue comes down to money. Manchester City have so much money that they can buy basically any player they want. Having the best players usually means that you can be competing to win trophies. Some would say this is unfair for teams like Newcastle United who do not nearly have as much money. If all teams in the Primer League had. Financial cap then players wouldn’t be as intrigued to go to certain clubs. This would in my opinion make competition allot more interesting.

10.How do you think the government should regulate your sport?

One of the biggest changes that needs to be seen is substitution rules regarding concussions. Concussion are one of the worst injures you can get in sport as they can leave permanent damage and cause life threatening issues. Implementing a rule which will allow a team to have “concussion substitution” is vital. The reason for this is because in soccer you are only allowed 3 substitutions at the professional level. Say your team has made all 3 substitutions and you go head-to-head with a player and get a concussion, say the player says they are fine and don’t shows symptom’s, yet they know they have one, the player might feel that they don’t want to “let down” there team so they keep playing. If there was a concussion substitution rule where a team could substitute someone with a concussion, then players may not need to feel like they must continue because they know a teammate can come on for them. This is something that I’ve researched and looks like it is being implemented in the MLS ASAP. This would improve the MLS, but also needs to be implemented in every league around the world. Another change to make the game better, is a change for the fans. I would like to see lower ticket prices. As discussed in class ticket prices have increased over the years and are now looked at as a luxury in most cases. I would like to see ticket prices come down. This is so it would make it more affordable for the working-class people who support this clubs and are one of the main reasons players get paid so much.

11..As we move into the future, what are three ways you see your sport changing to reflect the larger structure and culture of our society?

One of the possibilities of soccer is already being seen. This is the start of a new league, that comes with a whole new set of rules for players. Over the past few days there have been many rumors/ media attention surrounding the “Super League”. The Super League is a soccer league that has been created (nothing confirmed yet) that has basically every top team in the world playing in it. This are teams such as Chelsea FC, FC Barcelona, Manchester City FC, Liverpool FC, Real Madrid FC, Juventus, Manchester United, PSG, and many others. If the league was to go ahead this would mean that the players that play in the Super League would not be able to represent their country in the World Cup.

A second possibility is also currently taking place, relating to the Super League. This is through the use of fans. Many fans all over the world do not want this league to be created. They think that it’s taking the love out of the game and for the opportunity of underdogs, such as Leicester City in 2016 when the stunned the English Premier League and all the “top teams” and won the league. Fans are now taking matters into their own hands and speaking out and protesting against the Super League. Fans have been active on social media, as well as being active on club grounds (protesting outside their team stadiums). Signs such as “You’re nothing without us”, “Supper Greed”, “Fans Not Customers”, “Cancel Super League”, along with many others are being shown on all platforms. The fans are showing their power, and how they are the ones supporting different clubs/players. They are the ones working ‘normal’ jobs to pay for their season ticket/ tickets. Without their support who is going to support the clubs. This shows how the fans are showing that they are actually apart of the club and have power.

 The third possibility that could occur would be a financial cap. The Primer League is England’s highest soccer league. Players on average in the Primer League make around 3 million pounds a year. As you can see this is a lot of money for an average player to make. This being said, the top players in the Premier League make 3 million pounds look like spending money. The top clubs in the league such as Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea etc. are known for being able to by the top players as they have the money for it. Not every club in the league has the finances the top clubs have. This means that money is really no issue for the top clubs when wanting to buy a players. We saw this when Manchester United bought Paul Pogba was bought for 93.2 million pounds. Having a financial cap in the Premier League would mean that clubs could spend no more than a certain price on a player.